

# NEWSLETTER

*Spring 2023 Issue*



*A blooming trillium wildflower signals spring on our trails. Photographed by Andrew Kane.*

## **A Season of New Beginnings**

Spring is a welcome time of renewal. The increasing hours of daylight spotlight all of the new life that is emerging. I am excited to get outside and explore the variety of flora and fauna that have been tucked away these past few months. I look forward to enjoying the sun and energy of the Nature Center with all of you, just as Minna describes in the next article.

As we look forward to warm temperatures and summer's activities at the Nature Center, it is also a time to reflect on how fortunate we were to be able to explore winter's wonders here, too. Winter kicked off with a highly successful Holiday Bonanza, which included storytelling and bunny petting. The winter slate of activities was more robust than ever and highlighted by basket weaving, an ice fishing clinic, dog sledding, snowshoe rentals, and our first annual Kids' Week that took place over the winter school break. Visitors to the Nature Center also reported many wildlife sightings including deer, eagles, porcupines, owls, and the

magnificent pileated woodpecker. All of which you can see on our Facebook page.

The Friends' commitment to supporting environmental education programming that fosters conservation of local ecosystems, encourages outdoor recreation, and inspires our visitors to develop an increased respect for the natural world is stronger than ever. To everyone who joins us in advancing these efforts in all our seasons – thank you – we simply could not do it without you!

Lastly, I want to extend my deep gratitude to the Friends' past Board President, Andrew Kane, for his dedication and support of the Friends and its mission.

See you on the trails!

Jeffrey Hanna  
*Board President,  
Friends of the Nature Center*

## The Minna Anthony Common Series

# Pussy Willows Herald Spring

by Minna Anthony Common

April 15, 1933

*Reprinted with permission from the  
Watertown Daily Times.*

The flower lover's year, like that of the medieval calendars-makers, begins in March instead of in January. Then it is that twigs begin to show color with returning sap and snowdrops push their white bells above the chilly earth. By the first of April the gray pussywillows "show their silvery fur" at the brushy edge of the brown marshes or along the courses of the swollen brooks.

Some plants and shrubs choose their habitats in surroundings so appropriate that when we seek them out we often come away with memory pictures that afford even more pleasure than the find itself. This is the case with the pussywillow. There was the walk down the old lane – such a long way it seemed in childhood – bordered by gnarled willows, to the edge of a marsh where grew the "downy firstlings of the year." How shiny brown their twigs looked with the new sap of spring giving life to them! How winsome were the furry, gray pussies, tossing against the grayer sky! How sharp the spring wind came across the level, brown expanse of the bog so we were glad to take shelter behind a big, brown hemlock!

Or there was the edge of the beech woods where a bush of pussywillows leaned above a brook that rushed and roared, with all its

floodtime madness, bearing along cakes of ice and dead branches and flinging itself in white foam upon wet, brown rocks, while the great stately beeches stood in silent unmoving dignity above all its tumult, sheltering little patches of snow in the hollows about their roots.

One cannot talk of pussywillows without including their fragrance, that indescribable, illusive, woody scent, without which no spring would be complete. And, indeed, how could spring come to the North Country if we did not have pussywillows to herald it, while the chill winds roar over the bare, brown hills and snow lingers along the woodland borders?

"Although they do not really purr  
About their coats of stylish fur,  
They sit and warm themselves in the sun  
As countless other cats have done." ■



*Pussy willows*



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## From the Director

Dear Nature Center Community,

Welcome to a new year! We've had a great winter to get outside. Thank you to all 82 participants who joined us for the annual First Day Hike. The third annual Ice Fishing Clinic was also a success, with 32 in attendance. Big thank you to local fishing guide, Aziel Snyder, for donating his time and expertise for the past three years. Our monthly Free Snowshoes Days and snowshoe rentals have seen steady action with each major snowfall. We recently outfitted a family, who've been coming to Wellesley Island State Park (WISP) for years, on their first snowshoe adventure!

There is always something new to discover! We hosted a first-time dog sledding demonstration by local dog sled team "River Fever Mushing," which garnered a tremendous turnout! We also held our first-annual winter break Kids' Week series. Thank you to junior naturalist, Cecelia Thompson, for leading the Winter Track Identification program.

Despite the Nature Center still being surrounded by a deep pack of snow, there have been longer and sunnier days indicating that spring is imminent. WISP opens for the season on Friday, May 5, and the Nature Center transitions to being open seven days a week through October. *I Love My Park Day*, the annual statewide volunteer event, is the following day on Saturday, May 6. Spring means migrating birds, budding trees, and blooming wildflowers. Please see our calendar of events on pages 5-6.

Lastly, we are hiring! Please, see page 7 for more information on SCA/AmeriCorps and State Park seasonal positions.

We hope to see you soon!

Gabriela Padewska  
Nature Center Director



*Spring ephemeral wildflower Dutchman's Breeches*

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## For Your Consideration

### National Wildflower Week

National Wildflower Week is the first week in May! We encourage you to get outside and discover these ephemeral beauties. Check out *Flowers of April and May*, an excellent guide to native wildflowers found throughout our state, from the New York State Parks Blog: [nystateparks.blog/tag/wildflowers](https://nystateparks.blog/tag/wildflowers)

**THANK YOU to the following 51 *Friends* for joining or renewing their commitment recently**

Nancy Martin	Syracuse, NY	Dani Baker & David Belding	Wellesley Island, NY
Tom & Leah Neely	Redwood, NY	Allan Newell	Hammond, NY
Jodi Towne	Mannsville, NY	Ken White	Ithaca, NY
Kathleen Hummel	Clayton, NY	Brian & Kate Breheny	Clayton, NY
Richard & Carolyn Glass	Dunedin, FL	Andy & Susanne Duclon	Wellesley Island, NY
Eileen Kratzer	Wheat Ridge, CO	John & Rosemary Swedrock	Wellesley Island, NY
Larry & Nancy Kuhl	Esterro, FL	Lloyd & Carolyn Martin	Jamesville, NY
Marguerite Cleary	Princeton, NJ	Robert Hedden	Wellesley Island, NY
Joseph Latt	Wellesley Island, NY	Kim Burbank	Ft. Drum, NY
Mary Allis Latt	Wellesley Island, NY	Mary H. Arnot	Towson, MD
Bob & Beth Weldon	Watertown, NY	Bill & Eugenia Kavanaugh	Alexandria Bay, NY
Tom & Irene Carman	Wellesley Island, NY	Bill Munro	West Palm Beach, FL
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John & Melinda Comstock	Alexandria Bay, NY	Tina Siebels	Gouverneur, NY
Donna Gipperich	Alexandria Bay, NY	Barbara Hupp	Wellesley Island, NY
Jill Bouvier	Elbridge, NY	Linda McTague	Wellesley Island, NY
Maggie Reid	Fayetteville, NY	Norm & Nancy Pray	N. Syracuse, NY
Skip Behrhorst & Donna Fisher	Basalt, CO	Kathleen Cross Stout	Houston, TX
Brand & Kelli Gould	Denver, CO	John Bober & Dr. Lesley Snelling	New Canaan, CT
Sandra Rennie	La Jolla, CA	Joe & Kerry Koen	Hamilton, NY
Nicholas Yost	La Jolla, CA	Rick & Michele Gefell	Watertown, NY
Tara Parmiter	Brooklyn, NY	Ed & Claudia Smith	Oriskany, NY
Mary McNeill	Syracuse, NY	Joan T. Jordan	Clayton, NY
Carolyn Marlowe	Glen Park, NY	Bob & Kate Laisdell	Dexter, NY
Fritz Hager & Leslie Rowland	Wellesley Island, NY	Caroline Batterson	Sackets Harbor, NY
Arthur Mack & Mary Jo Champion	Clayton, NY		



**THANK YOU to the following 16 *Friends* for joining or renewing their commitment recently**

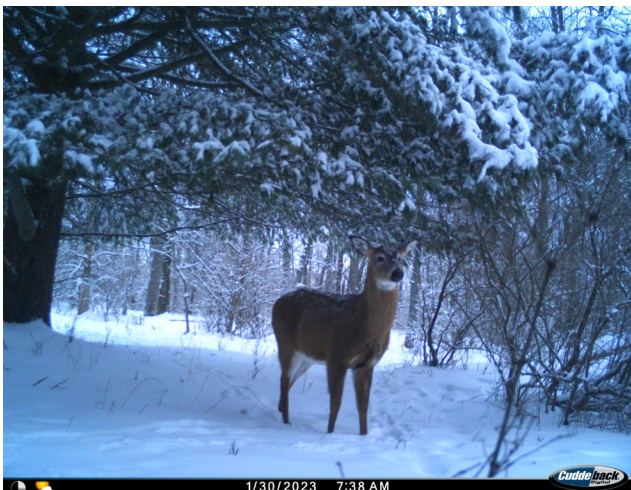
Ken & Karen Green Manlius, NY  
 Macar's, Inc. Watertown, NY  
 Sue Johnson Watertown, NY  
 John Johnson Watertown, NY  
 Ken & Tina VanHatten Theresa, NY  
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 Mary Ellen Gilmore Ponte Vedra Beach, FL

Al & Jane Arras Manlius, NY  
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 Andrew & Holly Kane Liverpool, NY  
 Don & Barb Rumpf Wellesley Island, NY  
 Marlaina Fram Redwood, NY  
 Jim & Pauline Litte Alexandria Bay, NY  
 Sandra Geiss Clayton, NY  
 Audie & Laura Cerow Clayton, NY

**Trail Cam Highlights**



Thank you to the *Daisy Marquis Jones Foundation* for generously supporting our technology needs!



# Spring Highlights



Scan to see the full calendar of events on our website

Preregistration recommended.  
Please call **(315) 482-2479** to register.

## RECURRING EVENTS

### FULL MOON HIKE

Thursday, April 6 // 7:15 p.m. *Pink Moon*

Friday, May 5 // 7:30 p.m. *Flower Moon*

Saturday, June 3 // 7:45 p.m. *Strawberry Moon*

Join us on our trails for monthly full moon hikes! We'll leave the Nature Center promptly 45 minutes before in hopes of catching a view of the moonrise. Please wear sturdy hiking shoes, layered clothing for warmth, and bring your own headlamp and/or flashlight. Following the hike we'll host a bonfire, cocoa, and snacks! Program subject to weather. Please call (315) 482-2479 to preregister.

## APRIL

### MUD SEASON HIKE

Saturday, April 1 // 1:00 p.m.—2:00 p.m.

In the North Country we have all four seasons plus one more, mud season. Help us celebrate mud season by joining us on a fun hike in the mud. Dress for the weather and make sure you bring mud boots for a mud-stomping adventure.

### ROCKS, FOSSILS, GLACIERS, OH MY!

Saturday, April 8 // 10:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.

Join high school naturalist Cecelia Thompson on a hands-on kids' talk on local rocks and fossils. After a short talk, Cecelia will lead a 2.5 mile hike along scenic Eel Bay trail to visit the glacial potholes. Dress for the weather and be prepared for hiking on dirt and rocky trails. Participants have the option to hike or just join in on the fun rock talk.

### OSPREY WATCHING

Saturday, April 15 // 10:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.

Ospreys migrate up to the North Country to return to their nests. Join us on a guided hike along our shoreline to see if we can spot these beautiful birds.



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## **EARTH DAY CELEBRATION featuring “LOVE THY NATURE”**

**Saturday, April 22**

**10:00 a.m.—Noon:** Shoreline cleanup with Save the River

**1:00 p.m.—2:30 p.m.** Film screening of “Love Thy Nature”

**2:30 p.m.—3:00 p.m.** Forest Meditation Hike

Join us for a day of focused attention on Mother Earth. Our program will include activities throughout the day as well as some crafts and opportunities to gain informational insight on a number of conservation strategies. The monumental film “Love Thy Nature” will be shown at 1:00 p.m. in our classroom (complete with popcorn!). We’ll have complimentary food and beverages for all participants.

## **ARBOR DAY at TILT’s Sissy Danforth Rivergate Trail**

**Saturday, April 29 // 10:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.**

Celebrate Arbor Day and the Thousand Islands Land Trust’s (TILT) 11th Annual “For the Trees” Celebration by planting trees at the S. Gerald Ingerson Preserve along the Sissy Danforth Rivergate Trail. Bring the whole family to get their hands dirty! There will be numerous family-friendly activities, workshops, games, and exhibits from TILT and many different organizations, including the Nature Center! For more information, please visit [tilandtrust.org](http://tilandtrust.org) or call (315) 686-5345.

## **MAY**

### **I LOVE MY PARK DAY**

**Saturday, May 6 // 9:00 a.m.—Noon**

Show your Nature Center some love! Volunteer to spruce up the Nature Center for spring and another busy summer season. This is the day when we get out our mop buckets, sponges, garden trowels, rakes, and clippers, and work to beautify our Nature Center. Preregistration is required. To preregister visit [ptny.org/ilovemypark](http://ptny.org/ilovemypark) or call the Nature Center at (315) 482-2479.

### **MOTHER’S DAY WEEKEND HIKE**

**Saturday, May 13 // 11:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.**

We’re inviting all moms and their families (and everyone else who would like to attend) to join us for a lovely hike in nature complete with a picnic lunch (provided). Moms will go home with a gift from the Nature Center to top off her special day! Please call to preregister.

### **LITTLE HANDS WILD!**

**Saturday, May 20 // 10:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m.**

Do you like making sandcastles? How about mud castles instead? Join us in some mud fun at our potting shed. Bring clothes and shoes that can get dirty. This will be a time to play, build, and explore in the mud. Feel free to bring some sand toys (mud toys) to play with.

## **JUNE**

### **FREE FISHING DAY**

**Saturday, June 24 // 10:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.**

Join us on the Nature Center’s dock on Eel Bay to celebrate Free Fishing Weekend! No fishing license required to attend this class. Learn the basics of freshwater fishing. Equipment will be provided; bringing your own bait appreciated.

We're Hiring!



Learn to paddle the Nature Center's 36-foot Voyageur Canoe!



Gain hands-on experience!

**Parks,  
Recreation &  
Historic  
Preservation**




**student  
conservation  
association**

Environmental Educators at the MAC Common Nature Center connect State Park visitors to the natural world through public programming, interpretive hikes, and outdoor recreation. Several positions available.

The Student Conservation Association and New York State Parks seek enthusiastic conservationists to provide critical environmental education and stewardship of public lands.

These are 7-month or 5-month AmeriCorps service positions in environmental education with concentrations listed below. Benefits include housing in Wellesley Island State Park.

Learn more at  
**MACNatureCenter.com**  
or call (315) 482-2479

- Three positions available:
1. Animal Care + Aquarium Husbandry
  2. Gardening + Land Stewardship
  3. Social Media + Design



Save the Date: Night for Nature

• SAVE THE DATE •

# *Night for Nature*



THURSDAY, JULY 13, 2023

*MAC Nature Center, Wellesley Island*

5 P.M. – 9 P.M.

*Live music • Complimentary Wine & Beer • Hors d'oeuvres*

**Visit [macnaturecenter.com](http://macnaturecenter.com) or scan to purchase tickets**



\$75 prepaid

\$85 at door



Remembering Our Friend: Spider Rybaak



*Spider unhooks a participant's catch at a fishing clinic*



*Spider loved sharing his passion for fishing with people*

This winter the Nature Center lost a good friend, programmer, and Nature Center supporter Raymond Hrynyk, professionally known as Spider Rybaak.

Spider was an avid sportsman and angler. He was an award-winning author and photographer. He loved fishing and wrote several books on the topic. Spider held fishing clinics at the Nature Center, sharing his knowledge of fishing for over 10 years. His joy and love of the sport were infectious! Spider also spearheaded our Children's Fishing Derby and was instrumental in getting prizes donated annually – without Spider the annual Derby would not have been possible.

Spider will truly be missed on our docks. But his memory will live on through the positive memories of many children and adults he has taught over the years. Because of Spider a new generation of people love fishing and the river. Spider, a heartfelt thank you from all of us.



*Spider at a Children's Fishing Derby*



**MISSION STATEMENT**

The Friends of the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center support environmental education programming that fosters conservation of local ecosystems, encourages outdoor recreation, and inspires our visitors to develop an increased respect for the natural world.



The Friends of the Nature Center, Inc. works in partnership with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.



**New York State  
Parks, Recreation and  
Historic Preservation**

**THE FRIENDS OF THE  
NATURE CENTER, INC.**

**BOARD MEMBERS**

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- Kerry Roberge
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- Jeffry Weldon

**WELLESLEY ISLAND STATE PARK**

- Steven Cline, *Park Manager*
- Paula Torino, *Assistant Park Manager*

**MINNA ANTHONY COMMON  
NATURE CENTER**

- Gabriela Padewska, *Director*
- Kimbrie Cullen, *Education Coordinator*
- Darlene Sourwine, *Outreach Coordinator*
- Mary Jean Jones, *Bookkeeper*



**Mark Your Calendars!**

**FRIENDS OF THE NATURE CENTER ANNUAL MEETING**

**Friday, April 14, 4:00 p.m.**

Join us for our 2023 Annual Meeting! Open to all members – the entire membership of Friends of the Nature Center is invited to attend.

The Friends of the Nature Center appreciate the support of members. Both charitable contributions and volunteer time are integral to the Nature Center’s continued success. Thank you!

**I LOVE MY PARK DAY**

**Saturday, May 6, 9:00 a.m.—noon**

Show your Nature Center some love! I Love My Park Day is the largest single-day volunteer event in New York! Volunteer to spruce up the Nature Center for spring and another busy summer season. This is the day when we get out our mop buckets, sponges, garden trowels, rakes, and clippers, and work to beautify our Nature Center. Preregistration is required. To preregister, call the Nature Center at (315) 482-2479 or visit [ptny.org/ilovemypark](http://ptny.org/ilovemypark)



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New York State  
Parks, Recreation and  
Historic Preservation



**Minna Anthony Common Nature Center**

Wellesley Island State Park  
44927 Cross Island Road  
Fineview, NY 13640  
(315) 482-2479

**HOURS OF OPERATION**

*Trails Open Sunrise to Sunset Daily*

**October–May (Off Season):**

Nature Center open Wednesday—Sunday  
9:00am—3:00pm

Closed Mondays and Tuesdays

**May–October (Operating Season):**

Nature Center open daily  
9:00am—3:00pm



Thank you, **The UPS Store** of Alexandria Bay, for your quality printing services.